

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1. An information processing apparatus connected through the internet to a first device having a display unit, the apparatus comprising:
  - 5 transmission means for transmitting contract setting image information for concluding a contract for a second device at the purchase of said second device by the user;
  - 10 reception means for receiving a first ID for specifying a first device having use history information transmitted through said internet and a second ID for specifying said second device;
  - 15 search means for searching first contract information corresponding to the first ID information received by said reception means; and
  - 20 generation means for generating second contract information for said second device based on the first contract information searched by said search means.
- 20 2. An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said generation means further generates display information for displaying said generated second contract information on said display unit, and said transmission means transmits said display information to an information equipment connected through said internet.

3. An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said device includes a printing apparatus.

5           4. An information processing apparatus for generating contract information including charge amount information per print output of an image forming apparatus, the information processing apparatus comprising:

10           reception means for receiving use status information of a first image forming apparatus owned by the user, through a predetermined communication medium;

              calculation means for calculation a number of points corresponding to said received use status information; and

15           calculation means for calculating a charge amount per print output, including a discount amount, of a second image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to said number of points.

20           5. An information processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said calculation means calculates said charge amount per print output including said discount amount according to the machine type information of said second image forming apparatus and said number of points, and said contract information includes information indicating the maintenance for

said image forming apparatus.

6. An information processing apparatus for  
respectively managing plural image forming apparatus  
5 correlated with identifiers, capable of communicating  
with said plural image forming apparatus through the  
internet, the information processing apparatus  
comprising:

calculation means for receiving the respective use  
10 status of said plural image forming apparatus,  
transmitted through said internet, and calculating a  
number of points according to said received use status;  
wherein said calculation means calculates a  
discount amount of a contract for an image forming  
15 apparatus constituting the object of a new contract,  
according to the calculated number of points.

7. An information processing apparatus according  
to claim 6, further comprising transmission means for  
20 transmitting, to said user, discount amount display  
information for displaying the discount amount  
calculated by said calculation means.

8. An information processing apparatus according  
25 to claim 6, wherein said calculation means sums the  
numbers of points accumulated for said plural image  
forming apparatus according to the use status of each

of said plural image forming apparatus, and said calculation means calculates the discount amount for said image forming apparatus constituting the object of said new contract according to said summed number of 5 points.

9. An information processing apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising memory means for storing the number of points accumulated in the past for an 10 image forming apparatus constituting the object of a prior contract of the user, wherein said calculation means calculates summed points by summing the numbers of points corresponding to the respective use status of said plural image forming apparatus and said 15 accumulated number of points in the past.

10. An information processing apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising discrimination means for discriminating whether date information included in 20 said accumulated number of points in the past is within a predetermined period, wherein said calculation means accumulates said accumulated number of points in the past to said summed points in case said discrimination means identifies that the date information is within 25 said predetermined period, but said calculation means does not accumulate said accumulated number of points in the past to said summed points in case said date

information is not within said predetermined period.

11. An information processing apparatus for  
generating first contract information for a first  
printing apparatus connected to a management apparatus  
of the user, the information processing apparatus  
comprising:

recognition means for recognizing the presence or absence of contract information corresponding to an identifier of said user; and

selection means for selecting a first charge table in case said recognition means recognizes the presence of contract information corresponding to said identifier of the user or a second charge table in case said recognition means recognizes the absence of contract information corresponding to said identifier of the user.

12. An information processing apparatus capable  
20 of bidirectional communication with a printing  
apparatus of the user through a predetermined  
communication medium, the information processing  
apparatus comprising:

reception means for receiving information  
25 indicating the use status of a first printing apparatus  
through said predetermined communication medium; and  
generation means for generating contract

information of a second printing apparatus according to  
said received use status information of said first  
printing apparatus;

wherein said contract information includes

5 information of a charge amount per print output of said  
printing apparatus, and said charge amount per print  
output includes a maintenance charge for said printing  
apparatus.

10 13. An information processing apparatus according  
to claim 12, wherein said reception means receives ID  
information transmitted through said predetermined  
communication medium for specifying said printing  
apparatus of the user, and further comprising  
15 transmission means for transmitting, to a management  
apparatus connected to said printing apparatus,  
information indicating a contract history list searched  
from said received ID information.

20 14. An information processing apparatus according  
to claim 13, wherein said list information includes  
contract history information for the plural printing  
apparatus specified by said ID, and the contract  
information for said plural printing apparatus  
25 respectively include discount information according to  
said use status.

15. An information processing apparatus according  
to claim 14, further comprising a flag generation means  
for generating information for displaying a flag  
allowing to identify, among said plural printing  
5 apparatus to which the discount amounts are  
respectively attached, a printing apparatus to which a  
higher discount amount is attached.

16. An information processing apparatus according  
10 to claim 12, further comprising memory means;  
wherein said memory means stores a table for  
calculating the discount amount per print output  
according to the use status of the printing apparatus,  
and said generation means calculates said charge amount  
15 per print output according to said use status and said  
table.

17. An information processing apparatus according  
to claim 14, further comprising discrimination means  
20 for discriminating whether date information attached to  
said contract discount information is within a  
predetermined period;  
wherein said generation means causes said discount  
information to be reflected on the contract information  
25 of said second printing apparatus in case said  
discrimination means identifies that said date  
information is within said predetermined period, but

does not cause said discount information to be reflected on the contract information of said second printing apparatus in case said discrimination means identifies that said date information is not within 5 said predetermined period.

18. An information processing apparatus connected to a second network capable of communication through a predetermined communication channel with a first 10 network to which plural information equipment are connected, the information processing apparatus comprising:

reception means for receiving first information on the use status of said information equipment through 15 said predetermined communication channel;

first output means for outputting information for instructing service providing to said information equipment based on said first information; and

second output means for outputting bill 20 information for said service providing to the user of said first network.

19. An information processing apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said plural information equipment 25 are image forming apparatus of mutually different kinds.

20. An information processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said plural information equipment receive service providing based on contracts of mutually different contents.

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21. An information processing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said contracts at least include a maintenance management contract in which a maintenance charge is paid according to the number of image 10 formations.

22. An information processing apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said contracts further include a contract in which the user pays, when the user desires 15 to receive a corresponding service, a corresponding service charge.

23. An information processing apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said first network includes 20 confirmation means for confirming whether the payment for a bill based on said bill information is appropriate or not.

24. An information processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said first network further 25 includes transfer means for transferring the result of confirmation by said confirmation means to said

information processing apparatus.

25. An information processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said confirmation means issues a  
5 service ID for confirming whether said service providing has been actually executed.

26. An information processing method by an information processing apparatus connected through the  
10 internet to a first device having a display unit, the method comprising:

15 a transmission step of transmitting contract setting image information for concluding a contract for a second device at the purchase of said second device by the user;

20 a reception step of receiving a first ID for specifying a first device having use history information transmitted through said internet and a second ID for specifying said second device;

25 a search step of searching first contract information corresponding to the first ID information received by said reception means; and

27. An information processing method by an

information processing apparatus for generating contract information including charge amount information per print output of an image forming apparatus, the method comprising:

5 a reception step of receiving use status information of a first image forming apparatus owned by the user, through a predetermined communication medium;

a calculation step of calculation a number of points corresponding to said received use status

10 information; and

a calculation step of calculating a charge amount per print output, including a discount amount, of a second image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to said number of points.

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28. An information processing method by an information processing apparatus for respectively managing plural image forming apparatus correlated with identifiers, and capable of communicating with said plural image forming apparatus through the internet, the method comprising:

a calculation step of receiving the respective use status of said plural image forming apparatus, transmitted through said internet, and calculating a number of points according to said received use status;

wherein said calculation means calculates a discount amount of a contract for an image forming

apparatus constituting the object of a new contract,  
according to the calculated number of points.

29. An information processing method by an  
5 information processing apparatus for generating first  
contract information for a first printing apparatus  
connected to a management apparatus of the user, the  
method comprising:

10 a recognition step of recognizing the presence or  
absence of contract information corresponding to an  
identifier of said user; and

15 a selection step of selecting a first charge table  
in case said recognition step recognizes the presence  
of contract information corresponding to said  
identifier of the user or a second charge table in case  
said recognition step recognizes the absence of  
contract information corresponding to said identifier  
of the user.

20 30. An information processing method by an  
information processing apparatus capable of  
bidirectional communication with a printing apparatus  
of the user through a predetermined communication  
medium, the method comprising:

25 a reception step of receiving information  
indicating the use status of a first printing apparatus  
through said predetermined communication medium; and

a generation step of generating contract information of a second printing apparatus according to said received use status information of said first printing apparatus;

5           wherein said contract information includes information of a charge amount per print output of said printing apparatus, and said charge amount per print output includes a maintenance charge for said printing apparatus.

10           31. An information processing method by an information processing apparatus connected to a second network capable of communication through a predetermined communication channel with a first network to which plural information equipment are connected, the method comprising:

              a reception step of receiving first information on the use status of said information equipment through said predetermined communication channel;

20           a first output step of outputting information for instructing service providing to said information equipment based on said first information; and

              a second output step of outputting bill information for said service providing to the user of said first network.

25           32. A computer readable memory medium storing

program codes to be executed by an information processing apparatus connected through the internet to a first device having a display unit, the program codes comprising:

5        a transmission step of transmitting contract setting image information for concluding a contract for a second device at the purchase of said second device by the user;

10      a reception step of receiving a first ID for specifying a first device having use history information transmitted through said internet and a second ID for specifying said second device;

15      a search step of searching first contract information corresponding to the first ID information received by said reception means; and

20      a generation step of generating second contract information for said second device based on the first contract information searched by said search step.

25      33. A computer readable memory medium storing program codes to be executed by an information processing apparatus for generating contract information including charge amount information per print output of an image forming apparatus, the program codes comprising:

26      a reception step of receiving use status information of a first image forming apparatus owned by

the user, through a predetermined communication medium;

a calculation step of calculation a number of points corresponding to said received use status information; and

5 a calculation step of calculating a charge amount per print output, including a discount amount, of a second image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to said number of points.

10 34. A computer readable memory medium storing program codes to be executed by an information processing apparatus for respectively managing plural image forming apparatus correlated with identifiers, and capable of communicating with said plural image forming apparatus through the internet, the program codes comprising:

15 a calculation step of receiving the respective use status of said plural image forming apparatus, transmitted through said internet, and calculating a 20 number of points according to said received use status; and

25 a discount amount calculation step of calculating a discount amount of a contract for an image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to the calculated number of points.

35. A computer readable memory medium storing

program codes to be executed by an information processing apparatus for generating first contract information for a first printing apparatus connected to a management apparatus of the user, the program codes comprising:

5 a recognition step of recognizing the presence or absence of contract information corresponding to an identifier of said user; and

10 a selection step of selecting a first charge table in case said recognition step recognizes the presence of contract information corresponding to said identifier of the user or a second charge table in case said recognition step recognizes the absence of contract information corresponding to said identifier 15 of the user.

36. A computer readable memory medium storing program codes to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of bidirectional communication with a printing apparatus of the user through a predetermined communication medium, the program codes comprising:

20 a reception step of receiving information indicating the use status of a first printing apparatus through said predetermined communication medium; and

25 a generation step of generating contract information of a second printing apparatus according to

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said received use status information of said first  
printing apparatus;

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wherein said contract information includes  
information of a charge amount per print output of said  
printing apparatus, and said charge amount per print  
output includes a maintenance charge for said printing  
apparatus.

37. A computer readable memory medium storing  
10 program codes to be executed by an information  
processing apparatus connected to a second network  
capable of communication through a predetermined  
communication channel with a first network to which  
plural information equipment are connected, the program  
15 codes comprising:

a reception step of receiving first information on  
the use status of said information equipment through  
said predetermined communication channel;

20 a first output step of outputting information for  
instructing service providing to said information  
equipment based on said first information; and

a second output step of outputting bill  
information for said service providing to the user of  
said first network.

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38. A program to be executed by an information  
processing apparatus connected through the internet to

a first device having a display unit, the program comprising:

5 a transmission step of transmitting contract setting image information for concluding a contract for a second device at the purchase of said second device by the user;

10 a reception step of receiving a first ID for specifying a first device having use history information transmitted through said internet and a second ID for specifying said second device;

15 a search step of searching first contract information corresponding to the first ID information received by said reception means; and

20 a generation step of generating second contract information for said second device based on the first contract information searched by said search step.

39. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus for generating contract information including charge amount information per print output of an image forming apparatus, the program comprising:

25 a reception step of receiving use status information of a first image forming apparatus owned by the user, through a predetermined communication medium;

25 a calculation step of calculation a number of points corresponding to said received use status

information; and

5 a calculation step of calculating a charge amount per print output, including a discount amount, of a second image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to said number of points.

10 40. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus for respectively managing plural image forming apparatus correlated with identifiers, and capable of communicating with said plural image forming apparatus through the internet, the program comprising:

15 a calculation step of receiving the respective use status of said plural image forming apparatus, transmitted through said internet, and calculating a number of points according to said received use status; and

20 a discount amount calculation step of calculating a discount amount of a contract for an image forming apparatus constituting the object of a new contract, according to the calculated number of points.

25 41. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus for generating first contract information for a first printing apparatus connected to a management apparatus of the user, the program comprising:

a recognition step of recognizing the presence or absence of contract information corresponding to an identifier of said user; and

5 a selection step of selecting a first charge table in case said recognition step recognizes the presence of contract information corresponding to said identifier of the user or a second charge table in case said recognition step recognizes the absence of contract information corresponding to said identifier  
10 of the user.

42. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of bidirectional communication with a printing apparatus of the user through a predetermined communication medium, the program comprising:

a reception step of receiving information indicating the use status of a first printing apparatus through said predetermined communication medium; and  
20 a generation step of generating contract information of a second printing apparatus according to said received use status information of said first printing apparatus;

wherein said contract information includes information of a charge amount per print output of said printing apparatus, and said charge amount per print output includes a maintenance charge for said printing

apparatus.

43. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus connected to a second network capable of communication through a predetermined communication channel with a first network to which plural information equipment are connected, the program comprising:

10 a reception step of receiving first information on the use status of said information equipment through said predetermined communication channel;

a first output step of outputting information for instructing service providing to said information equipment based on said first information; and

15 a second output step of outputting bill information for said service providing to the user of said first network.